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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the two core challenges facing institutions interested in delivering courses online: the increased need for faculty with interests and skills in this area, who can master the technology, take advantage of the new pedagogy mandated by teaching in a text-based environment, and maintain their subject area competence; and the delivery of academic support services, so that faculty are sufficiently trained to take advantage of these resources in the design and delivery of their World Wide Web-based courses. Strategies and practices used at the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) Graduate School of Management & Technology (GSMT) are described, including a four-phased, two semester training program; ongoing faculty support and supervision; an extensive UMUC faculty development program; and an intense and supportive relationship with the Office of Library Services. The paper is organized in the following six sections: (1) training GSMT faculty; (2) GSMT "time" research (i.e., research on the amount of time needed to teach an online course and what elements are involved); (3) retaining online faculty; (4) educating faculty about online library resources; (5) library workshops; (6) the online library resources course for new students and faculty; and (7) delivery and evaluation of this course. (DLS)

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Training, and Retaining, Faculty for Online Courses: Challenges and Strategies

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Introduction

Institutions interested in delivering courses on the web face two core challenges in training faculty to teach in this environment. First, the online environment has meant an increased need for faculty with interests and skills in this area who can master the technology, take advantage of the new pedagogy mandated by teaching in a text-based (and often non-visual environment), and maintain their subject area competence. Second, the online environment poses new challenges for the delivery of academic support services—especially online research and resources—so that faculty are sufficiently trained to take advantage of these resources in the design and delivery of their web-based courses.

At the Graduate School of Management & Technology (GSMT) we have a multi-faceted approach for dealing with these challenges: a four-phased, two semester training program; ongoing faculty support and supervision; an extensive UMUC faculty development program; and, most critically, an intense and supportive relationship with the Office of Library Services. These approaches are continually re-examined as we deal with two additional challenges: concern by faculty about the amount of "time" it takes to teach an online course, and the need to continually train/update online faculty due to new technological developments or last minute assignments.

The GSMT was established in 1978 to provide management education to the population that had been served by UMUC since its inception in 1947: working adults who attend school part-time. At present, GSMT offers 7 masters' degrees, 4 of them totally online: Master of Science in Management, Master of Science in Computer Systems Management, Master of Science in Technology Management, Master of International Management (see www.umuc.edu/prog/gsmt/dist-ed.html). Since our first online offerings in spring 96 (one course), we have grown to offering about 50 courses in fall 98 (not sections; thus the total will be greater by fall). Online courses are conducted via the web in a web conferencing system designed by UMUC (WebTycho); at present this system is primarily text-based. The task of teaching over 200 sections per semester is accomplished by a cadre of part-time faculty, most of whom have a doctorate (88%) plus extensive management experience. GSMT has about 3500 students and 250 faculty in its ranks.

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Training GSMT Faculty

Since the creation of the Distance Learning & Instructional Technology office in July 1997, an extensive faculty training program (FTP) has been developed. The FTP has four phases: 1) initial training and homework—this occurs over 3 weeks during the semester, and covers both the technology and pedagogy, applied assignments, intensive discussion of DE teaching issues from a student and then faculty perspective; 2) observing an experienced instructor and writing an observer's memo, and working in a "practice" class for the remainder of the semester; 3) mentored teaching with feedback, by an experienced online instructor, during the first semester of teaching; 4) participating in an online discussion group mid-way during the first teaching semester. Successful completion of phases 1 and 2 (initial training, shadowing, practice class) results in a "Training Certificate"; completion of phases 3 and 4 results in a "Teaching Certificate." It should be noted that the FTP is part of a larger project, the Continuous Learning Program for Distance Faculty.

In addition, GSMT provides support and supervision to its online faculty by the use of "course managers"(full-time faculty/administrators) who design the master syllabus (required for the course), hire adjuncts, provide guidance and support, get textbooks and other materials for the instructor, do site visits (online this means "shadowing" the part-time instructor), assist with student problems and facilitate dealing with the usual administrivia; local faculty also meet early in the fall and spring semesters for an all-hands-on-deck faculty meeting; extensive faculty development opportunities are also available at no charge (see discussion below). The bonds between GSMT and its part-time faculty is so strong that many of the instructors have been with us for over a decade!

GSMT "Time" Research

The advent of technology and the online environment has, despite the support noted above, raised some strong concerns among our faculty about the amount of "time"it takes to teach an online course and what elements are involved. To deal with this issue, we began a pilot research in 96–97 among the group of online instructors (n = 9); in 97–98 we formalized the study to include both online (n = 29) and in person (n = 49) classes. [note: n = number of respondents, not total faculty/sections offered] The results, so far, indicate that while web classes are smaller (median 23) than in person classes (median 30), web faculty spent about 2–5 hours more per week in their classes than in person faculty. Some of the areas which account for differences in web class time when compared to in person classes, are the amount of time grading exams (median 2.5–3 hours online; .5–1 hour in person), the amount of individual contact between student and teacher (median 3–2 hours online; .5 each semester in person), obtaining additional resources for students (median 1.5 hours online; 1 in person). The greatest contrast was the amount of time faculty spent on developing their courses—online faculty spent 2½ to 3 times longer (median 50–40 hours online; 18–17 hours in person).

Several caveats are necessary with respect to this data: first, this is self-reported data and thus depends on the memories and perceptions of the respondents; second, the surveys were distributed at the end of the semester and are thus subject to a possible "recency" effect; third, the number of respondents remains too small for statistically significant conclusions at this point. Nonetheless, these data indicate patterns which bear watching and issues which need continued attention.

Retaining Online Faculty

Another challenge with which we are confronted is the need to retain and retrain online faculty, despite any concerns about time or changing technology. We do this by having course managers work closely with their faculty in teaching selections, by offering a stipend for the training and for the teaching online, by providing refresher (updated) training sessions at GSMT, and by working closely with UMUC's Faculty Development Office in providing more than 30 onsite and online workshops at no charge to the faculty. These workshops focus on four major themes: globalization, computer literacy, information literacy, effective writing. This past year UMUC has offered programs about Issues in Fair Use of Web Resources, Enhancing Student Interactivity, Getting Published on the Web, Designing Effective Assignments to Build Information Literacy and Writing Skills, and so on.

However, the most effective, most up-to-date and most beloved workshops are those designed and lead by our colleagues in the Office of Library Services (OLS). These workshops include Information and Literacy Across the Curriculum, Introduction to Online Research, and Searching the Web. And this fall, we begin a new joint venture: a required course (for new students and faculty) on using online library resources.

Educating Faculty About Online Library Resources

The University of Maryland University College faculty are predominantly part-time and scattered throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. The time constraints faced by part-time faculty coupled with the issues of distance, pose two significant barriers in teaching our faculty about online library resources. A third challenge in teaching UMUC faculty is the fact that the Office of Library Services delivers the majority of its services via the Internet and faculty vary widely in their knowledge of, access to, and use of the Internet. Unlike the traditional course on a college campus, where use of electronic library resources is a matter of choice, the online environment requires faculty to be versed in using online resources. If faculty are not knowledgeable in the use of online library resources, it is frustrating for faculty because it makes it difficult for them to assist students who must complete a research paper in almost every online graduate course. Once faculty are introduced to the use of online resources they are able to help students conduct research more effectively and students are more interested in and engaged in the research process. Therefore, OLS, in conjunction with the GSMT, has developed a comprehensive training program to assist online faculty to use these resources.

Library Workshops

Initially, OLS offered a series of voluntary in-classroom workshops on using online library resources, focusing primarily on the online catalog, and web-based, citation, abstract, and full-text journal databases. These courses were limited, however, to faculty in the local area and as a result could not serve the majority of faculty. Therefore, one year ago, OLS launched a series of Web-based workshops including one on using the proprietary, full-text online library resources, one on using the "free" resources on the Web, and a third on how to develop writing and research assignments using online resources accessible to students taking a course in the online environment. In some cases the courses are for beginners and in others, the courses build on each other and faculty are encouraged to take the workshops in

sequence. If faculty choose not to take the courses in sequence, we also publish prerequisites for the workshop (e.g., familiarity with a Web browser such as Netscape).

To date, 240 faculty, located on three continents, have participated in at least one workshop, and the demand for these workshops continues to grow. Faculty have found the workshops an excellent alternative to the traditional in-classroom faculty development workshop format. The workshops are a combination of computer-mediated conferencing, electronic mail for announcements and one-on-one interaction, and a series of modules with exercises that faculty complete at their own pace. It is our expectation that faculty will commit five hours to complete the requirements of the online workshop and share their experiences doing the exercises and participating in the workshop with their colleagues. Each workshop is scheduled for one week. However, course materials are made available for one month after the official end of the workshop including telephone and online access to the instructor. Afterwards, faculty have the option to use the course materials indefinitely.

The appropriate length for these workshops is still under debate. Some faculty would like them to be longer. However, we initially offered the workshops over a period of two weeks and found that participants started to disappear after the first week. As a result, we are using one week as the basis for development of the modules and for determining the length and complexity of the exercises.

The Online Library Resources Course

In addition to the voluntary workshops available to undergraduate and graduate faculty, the Graduate School decided that new students and new faculty need to have an introduction to the online library resources. This decision was based on the discovery, through our regular surveys of students, that students are unaware of the wide range of online resources that are available to them. Therefore, the faculty member plays a crucial role in introducing students to online resources. Further, providing faculty an introduction to online library resources makes it possible for them to utilize these resources in the design and delivery of their course. In addition, faculty have the opportunity to learn what their students have access to. As a result, they can develop assignments that students can successfully complete and thereby ensure their expectations for student research are realistic. In response to the need to set up a course that would give students and faculty a solid introduction to online library resources, OLS developed a non-credit, required online course for new graduate students and faculty. The course is entirely on the Web, using UMUC's Web-based instructional management system, WebTycho. It is self-paced, and self-assessed. In order to assure that the course meets the needs of the students and faculty, the course content was reviewed by the full-time faculty, some part-time faculty, and a select group of students before the final version was developed.

The course provides an in-depth introduction to doing research online and using UMUC's electronic library for research purposes. The course uses a combination of computer-based conferencing, lectures, and exercises to help faculty and students learn about online resources. In addition, the course includes a series of online quizzes that are generated and evaluated by a computer program and therefore, students get immediate feedback on their grasp of the concepts covered in the course and if they fail to perform adequately, are directed back to the portions of the course they were deficient in for further study and review.

The course does not have a formal instructor. However, if faculty or students do have questions, the library's reference staff are available to provide assistance in completing the various modules.

Course Delivery and Evaluation

The course is scheduled for formal delivery in the fall semester of 1998. Systematic evaluation of the course will continue. We expect that the course will be under revision on a regular basis. The primary reason is that the number of online resources UMUC offers is constantly growing and the new resources need to be added to keep the course content current. The library has assigned one staff member to spend forty percent of her time updating and maintaining the course. We have discovered that development of the course is only one part of the process and the need to continually monitor and update the course is another time consuming part of the process. In addition, we are not yet sure the extent to which faculty and students will be able to complete the course without any outside assistance. We plan to keep detailed statistics on the number of faculty and students who contact the librarians and the types of problems they encounter to determine where there may be problems with course delivery and to evaluate whether an instructor is needed. We are hopeful that the Web-based format will offer faculty and students flexibility in taking the course and provide a solid introduction to research and using online resources to ensure faculty and students all begin with a basic understanding of the research tools available and they will be skilled in evaluating the quality of the resources they use.

Autobiographical Sketches

Dr. Claudine SchWeber is currently Director of Distance Learning and Instructional Technology at the Graduate School of Management & Technology (GSMT) of the University of Maryland University College, and an adjunct Professor of Management. She is a specialist in conflict management and has done training, teaching, and writing in this field for over a decade. In recent years she has written about the use of technology in conflict management, especially as it impacts those at great distances or those with disabilities. Dr. SchWeber is a certified mediator of disputes under the American with Disabilities Act. Prior to joining GSMT, Dr. SchWeber was the training director for the Council of Better Business Bureaus in the Mediation-Arbitration Division and earlier a research assistant in the District of Columbia Superior Court. Before that she was Associate Professor of criminal justice in Buffalo, New York—a field of work which literally drove her to look for better solutions to resolving conflicts. She is the author of one book, more than 25 articles, testimony before the United States Congress, and over a hundred presentations; she also volunteers as a mediator, an Ethics Commissioner in her city, and the board of directors of a foundation dealing with issues related to the ADA. All of these activities make her yearn all the more for the time to be with her family, to travel, go hiking and camping, and finish the quilt she started 3 years ago!

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Dr. Kelley has her Bachelor's degree in animal behavioral psychology, a Master's Degree in Information Science from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and a Ph.D in Education from the University of Maryland, College Park. The topic of her dissertation and current research interest is the influence of discipline on faculty use of the World Wide Web (WWW). In her professional life she is the Director of Library Services at the University of Maryland University College (UMUC). Prior to coming to UMUC, she was the Chief Librarian for the Museum Support Center at the Smithsonian Institution and Head of Reference and Collection Development for the Engineering and Psychology Libraries of Columbia University in the City of New York. She has published on the use of technology in libraries and is a frequent speaker on the use of the Internet, WWW, distance education and libraries. Most recently, she developed a graduate library research skills course for the Web, delivered a series of faculty workshops on using electronic library resources through UMUC's Web-based instructional management system, Tycho, and is currently developing a Web-based, one credit course on library research for UMUC's Undergraduate Programs.

Gloria J. Orr is the Associate Director in UMUC's Office of Library Services. Ms. Orr is responsible for providing resources and services to UMUC's distant students, overseeing operations at an off-site library, coordinating the libraries' collection development program, and monitoring circulation activities. She has been involved in teaching students and faculty how to access electronic resources, and contributed to UMUC's handbook on library services and UMUC's guide on writing and research. She has published an article in an American Library Association journal. Ms. Orr has a B.A. in Asian Studies from Florida State University, a M.A. in South Asian Studies from the University of Wisconsin, and a M.S. in Library and Information Science from the Catholic University of America.

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